

# Granddad 'devoted' to Bulli Hospital

By LISA CARTY

For 36 years Sydney Atkins has devoted much of his time to improving Bulli Hospital – but only recently has he experienced the health system from the inside.

The Thirroul great-grandfather had his first hospital admission eight years ago when he was a spritely 72, and just a month ago he had a quadruple bypass operation.

Mr Atkins, who receives a medal in the general division of the Order of Australia (OAM), can't remember exactly why he decided Bulli Hospital was a good cause.

"I think some friends were involved so I decided to get involved too," he said.

A pastry-cook who hung up his rolling pin after 18 years to become a truck owner-driver doing contract work for Wollongong Council, Mr Atkins said he used his truck to help build a carpark at the hospital.

A ward was named in his honour in 1976 and it was there he lay for a week after he collapsed from still unknown causes in 1989.

"When the nurses came in to the Syd Atkins Ward and saw they had a patient called Syd Atkins they thought someone was pulling their legs," he said.

His time as an in-patient obviously vindicated his efforts as the community representative on the hospital's management committee – "I was very happy with everything," he said.

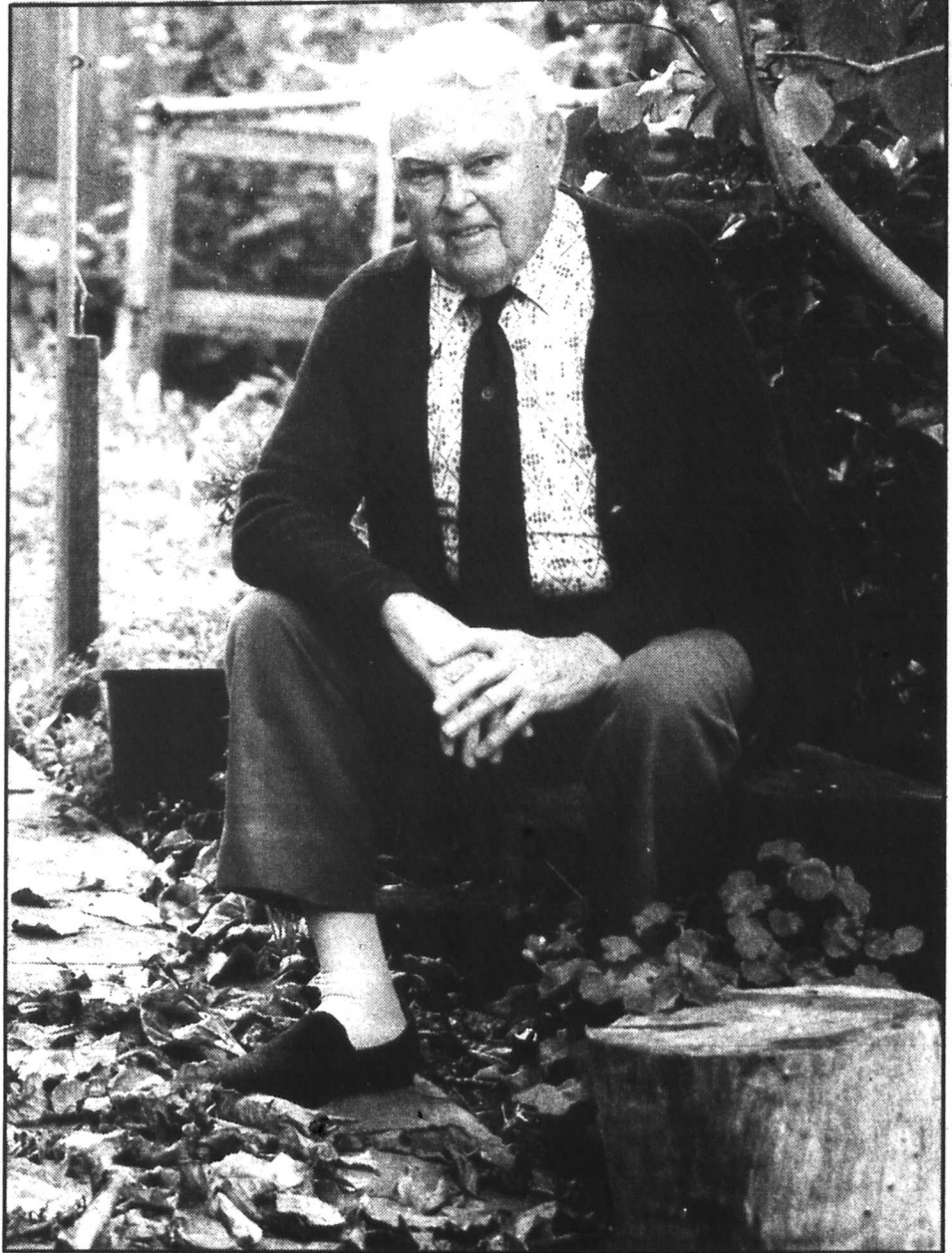
Mr Atkins, who wrote a history of the hospital in 1992 to mark its centenary, managed to stay on the outside until last month when the surprise diagnosis of an ailing heart saw him admitted into a Sydney hospital for the bypasses.

Now ambling about his Thirroul home, Mr Atkins – who is a foundation member of the Illawarra Retirement Trust – said he planned to continue his involvement with Bulli Hospital until he died.

"I don't plan to do anything else," he said.

He said he was "very pleased" to be honoured in the Queen's Birthday awards.

Picture: ORLANDO CHIODO



Thirroul's Sydney Atkins OAM – honoured for his work over the years with Bulli Hospital.